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PSC INVITES PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSED EXTENDED AREA PHONE SERVICE

Public Service Commissioner Bob Rowe will conduct a public hearing in West Glacier on December 9 to hear comments on US West Communications' and PTI Communications' proposals for telephone extended area service between West Glacier and the Flathead Valley. Extended area service expands local calling areas so that customers' phone calls within an EAS region will be local, not long-distance. However, local phone rates in an EAS region must increase to recover EAS costs.

The hearing will be held Monday, December 9, at 7 p.m., at West Glacier Headquarters, Park Service Community Building.

West Glacier is served by US West, while PTI serves the Flathead Valley. Both companies have proposed increases in their customers rates in order to recover EAS implementation costs and revenue that would be lost if local calling was provided between West Glacier and the Flathead Valley.

PTI proposes to increase its customers' rates by 14 cents per month. US West proposes the same three alternative EAS rate proposals that are currently being considered by the PSC for seven other proposed EAS regions. They are:

Option 1: Increase local rates by the same amount for all customers in all US West exchanges in which EAS is approved. Under this option, customers in US West's EAS exchanges, including West Glacier, would pay an extra \$2.62 per month.

Option 2: Increase local rates based on the total number of lines EAS makes available for local calling. Under this proposal, West Glacier customers would pay an extra \$3.22 per month, which is the amount proposed for EAS regions with more than 45,000 total lines available for local calling.

Option 3: Increase local rates based on the number of additional lines made available by EAS to an individual exchange for local calling. Under the four variations of this alternative and depending on the PSC's decision, West Glacier customers' extra monthly charge would be \$4, or \$5.65, or \$7.93, or \$10.19. West Glacier customers would gain more than 20,000 lines for local calling if EAS with the Flathead Valley is approved.

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